



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF GASTROENTEROLOGY
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DE GASTROENTÉROLOGIE
CAG/ACG National Office, 2902 South Sheridan Way, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7L6 CANADA
Telephone: 905-829-2504 Fax: 905-829-0242 Toll Free: 1-888-780-0007
E-mail: cagoffice@cag-acg.org Website: <http://www.cag-acg.org>

President/Président

William G. Paterson, MD
Kingston, ON
Ph: 613-544-3400 x 2332
Fax: 613-544-3114
President@cag-acg.org

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President Elect/Président Désigné

Ronald Bridges, MD
Calgary, AB
Ph: 403-210-9356
Fax: 403-220-8747
PresidentElect@cag-acg.org

The Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

Past President/Président Sortant

Desmond J. Leddin, MB
Halifax, NS
Ph: 902-473-7833
Fax: 902-473-4406
PastPresident@cag-acg.org

<<Sent by email (pm@pm.gc.ca) and mail>>

V-P Clinical Affairs/V-P Affaires Cliniques

Dan Sadowski, MD
Edmonton, AB
Ph: 780-735-6837
Fax: 780-735-5650
ClinicalAffairs@cag-acg.org

Dear Prime Minister Harper,

V-P Finance/V-P Finances

Carlo Fallone, MD
Montreal, QC
Ph: 514-843-1616
Fax: 514-843-1421
Finance@cag-acg.org

We are writing on behalf of the Canadian Association of Gastroenterology (CAG) to encourage you and your cabinet colleagues to address the problem of under funding of health research in Canada. At the last operating grants competition of the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) the success rate for grant applications dropped precipitously to 16% and budgets were cut a further 26% by council. This comes at a time when both federal and provincial governments have invested heavily in research infrastructure, which has set the stage for Canada to be highly competitive on the world stage. Unfortunately, the amount of operating dollars to actually conduct the research has lagged far behind. Canada now risks losing outstanding researchers and highly trained individuals to other countries or other careers, which will have a dramatic negative impact on healthcare research and innovation in Canada for years to come. This is not only concerning from the viewpoint of the health of Canadians, but is a lost opportunity in terms of commercialization opportunities of biomedical discoveries.

V-P Secretary/Secrétaire

E. Jan Irvine, MD
Toronto, ON
Ph: 416-864-5060
Fax: 416-861-8378
Secretary@cag-acg.org

V-P Treasurer/Trésorier

Derek McKay, PhD
Calgary, AB
Ph: 403-220-7362
Fax: 403-210-8119
Treasurer@cag-acg.org

Committee Chair/Président(e)s de Comités

Admissions: Nathalie Vergnolle, PhD
Archives: Noel Williams, MD
Communications: David Morgan, MD
Education: Alaa Rostom, MD
Endoscopy: David Armstrong, MD
Ethics: J. Decker Butzner, MD
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Nominations: E. Jan Irvine, MD
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Research: Kris Chadee, PhD

The Canadian Association of Gastroenterology is particularly concerned about this issue. Digestive diseases are responsible for 15% of the direct healthcare costs in Canada, which is higher than cardiovascular, mental health, respiratory or cancer. Despite this, research dollars allocated to digestive health have generally lagged far behind these other areas. Researchers in digestive diseases are particularly vulnerable given the relative lack of lay organizations that fund digestive health research. As a result, digestive health researchers are more dependent on CIHR funding than most other disciplines.

Executive Director

Paul Sinclair, MSc

Canadian Journal of Gastroenterology, Editor

Paul Adams, MD

As you know, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance has recommended that the federal Government increase CIHR's base budget by \$350 million over three years and that the indirect costs of research are funded at a minimum rate of 40% for every dollar of federally sponsored research. While we recognize the Government is facing a number of fiscal challenges, funding of health research, and in particular appropriate allocation of money for operating grants, must be a top priority in the upcoming budget. We therefore strongly urge you to implement the Standing Committee's recommendation. By insuring that operating grants keep pace with our capacity, Canada will be able to measure this return on investment in many ways, including greater capacity for commercialization in lucrative health-related industries, new jobs and the retention of world class scientists. This is in addition to the obvious benefits to the quality of Canadian healthcare itself. The Canadian Association of Gastroenterology feels very strongly that the upcoming federal budget must invest appropriately in CIHR in order that Canada's Health Research enterprise is not only preserved but enhanced.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely,



William G. Paterson, MD, FRCPC
President, CAG



Kris Chadee, PhD
Research Committee Chair, CAG

- C The Honourable James M. Flaherty, Minister of Finance
- The Honourable Tony Clement, Minister of Health
- The Honourable Maxime Bernier, Minister of Industry
- Dr. Alan Bernstein, President, CIHR
- Dr. Diane Finegood, Scientific Director, CIHR Institute of Nutrition, Metabolism and Diabetes
- Dr. David Brener, Director, CIHR Research Translation Programs